




Responding to Patron *Frustrations* in a Resource Sharing Environment

Presented by Susie Duncan
University of Illinois Library at Urbana-Champaign,
December 2014



Please share one of your patron nightmare scenarios.

For example, patrons who had unrealistic expectations, who were already riled up before they even got to you, schools with policies in conflict with your own or with CARLI's etc.





By Bastique (Own work) [Public domain],
via Wikimedia Commons
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AMagic_wand.svg

You are not alone ...



Pixabay License: CC0 Public Domain
Free for commercial use / No attribution required

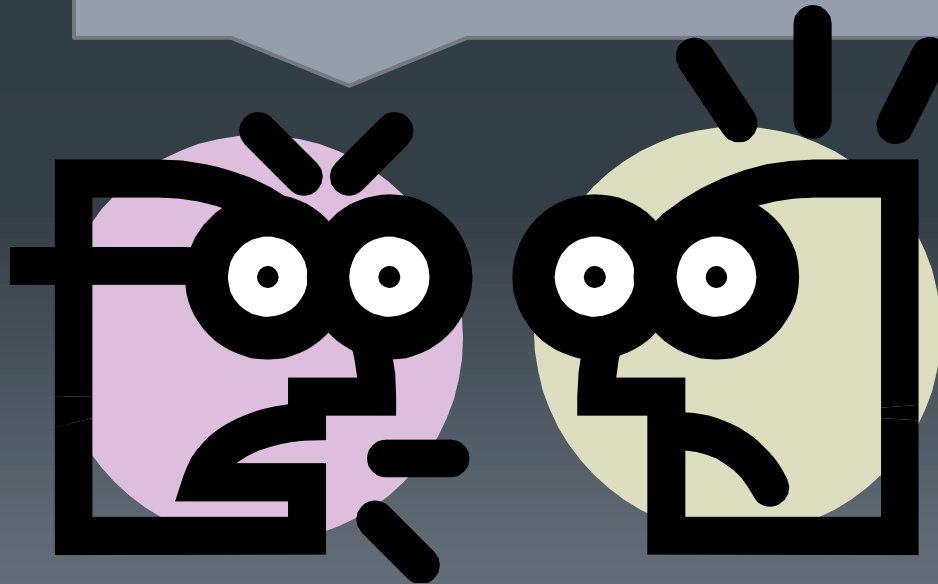
Almost everyone hates conflict



Marco Arcangeli chiara2_photo Taken on May 13, 2007
License: Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

It's not personal.

It's not you, it's the big U –
the University! Or maybe
even the #@!\$?# Universe!



Experience



"Colourful shopping carts" by Jim - <http://www.flickr.com/photos/alphageek/121953651>. Licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons.
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Colourful_shopping_carts.jpg#mediaviewer/File:Colourful_shopping_carts.jpg

What annoys 'customer-you'?



By Wyeillumaz (Own work) [CC-BY-SA-3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons

Why do they act like that?



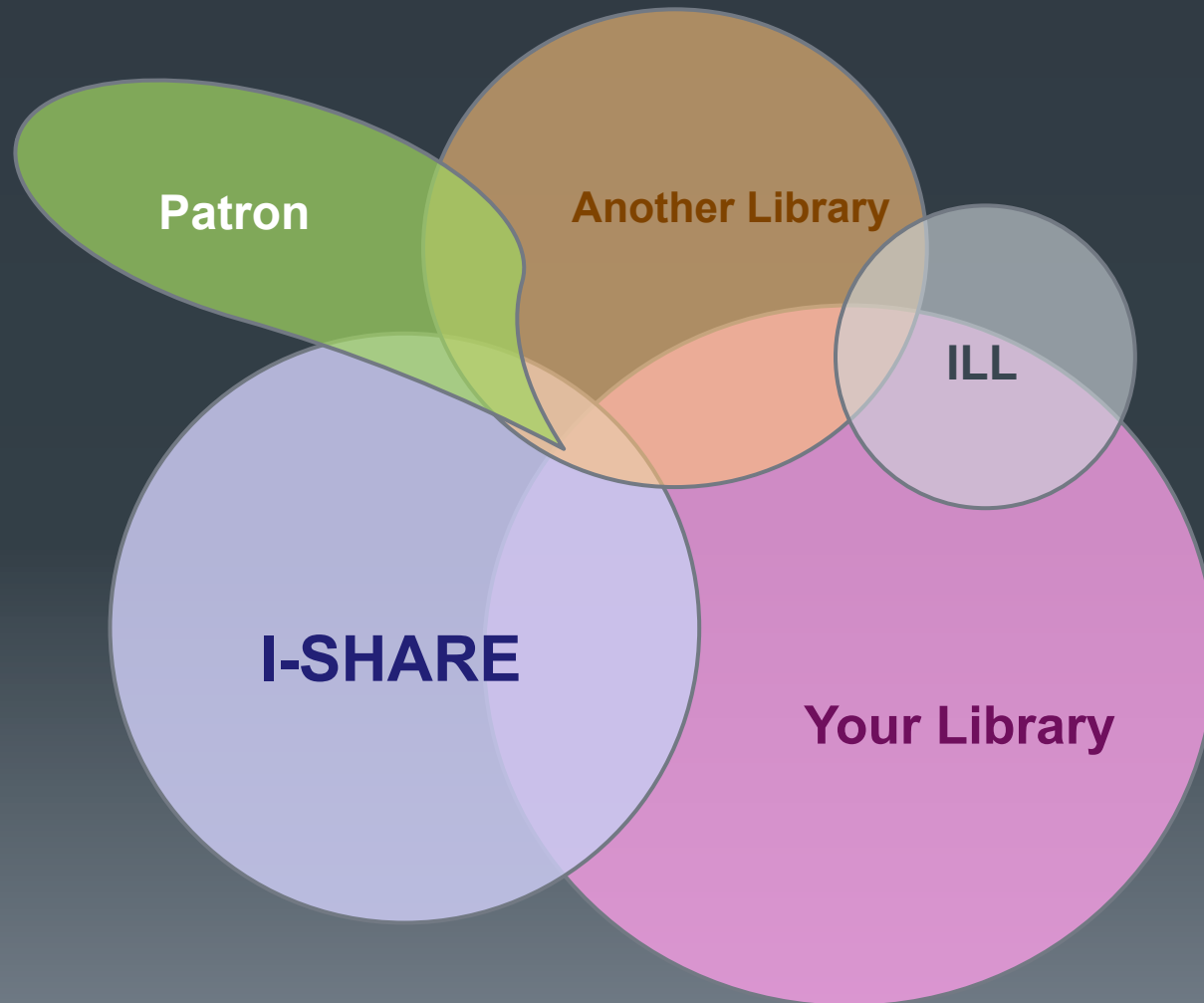
By Hannibal Poenaru from near Paris, France (flickr.com) [CC-BY-SA-2.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0>)], via Wikimedia Commons

Empathetic Distancing



This image is posted under a Creative Commons - Attribution Licence, in accordance with the Open Government Licence. 'Simon Davis/DFID'.

Boundaries in a consortium . . .



The screenshot displays the CARLI website interface. At the top, the CARLI logo is on the left, and a navigation bar contains links for NEWS, JOBS, MEMBER DIRECTORY, WIKI, and CONTACT. Below the logo, a secondary navigation bar includes PRODUCTS & SERVICES, MEMBERSHIP, EVENTS, GOVERNANCE, and ABOUT, along with a search box. The main content area features a breadcrumb trail: PRODUCTS & SERVICES / I-SHARE (VOYAGER) / CIRCULATION & UNIVERSAL BORROWING/INTERLIBRARY LOAN. A sub-navigation bar for I-Share (Voyager) includes OVERVIEW, DOCUMENTATION, LIAISONS GUIDE, ANNUAL STATISTICS, and SEARCH I-SHARE >>. The main heading is "Circulation & Universal Borrowing/Interlibrary Loan". On the left, a sidebar menu lists: expand / collapse all, Policies, Best Practices & Workflow Recommendations, Configuration & Technical Information, and Past Events and Webinars. On the right, a "SYSTEM STATUS" section shows "All Systems Active: All Services are Online". Below that, a "POPULAR DOCUMENTATION TOPICS" section lists: Frequently Asked Questions About I-Share Next, I-Share Membership Agreement, and Using I-Share to Request Materials from I-Share Libraries: A Guide for ILLINET Libraries.

CARLI Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois

NEWS JOBS MEMBER DIRECTORY WIKI CONTACT

PRODUCTS & SERVICES MEMBERSHIP EVENTS GOVERNANCE ABOUT Search

PRODUCTS & SERVICES / I-SHARE (VOYAGER) / CIRCULATION & UNIVERSAL BORROWING/INTERLIBRARY LOAN

I-Share (Voyager) OVERVIEW DOCUMENTATION LIAISONS GUIDE ANNUAL STATISTICS SEARCH I-SHARE >>

Circulation & Universal Borrowing/Interlibrary Loan

expand / collapse all

- ▶ Policies
- ▶ Best Practices & Workflow Recommendations
- ▶ Configuration & Technical Information
- ▶ Past Events and Webinars

SYSTEM STATUS

All Systems Active: All Services are Online

POPULAR DOCUMENTATION TOPICS

- Frequently Asked Questions About I-Share Next
- I-Share Membership Agreement
- Using I-Share to Request Materials from I-Share Libraries: A Guide for ILLINET Libraries



Who are we?

Let's go to the polls.

Each transaction is another
opportunity to . . .





Let's divide the angry into two categories . . .

1. Steamrollers.

"I know what I want and you're going to give it to me."

2. The Harassed

"It's all falling apart!"

Meet Steamrollers with simplicity. Keep it stark.



Robynn, Pixabay License: CC0 Public Domain / Free for commercial use / No attribution required

Help the
harassed
find the
next
foothold.



"Climbing Wall Singapore" Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.5 via Wikimedia Commons - http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Climbing_Wall_Singapore.jpg#mediaviewer/File:Climbing_Wall_Singapore.jpg

Acknowledgement



*“I’d like to
thank the
Academy . .
.”*

Not that kind...

Acknowledge their feelings

I'm sorry you had difficulties with the return of this item.

That must have been very frustrating.

I can see where *(this policy)* might have caught you by surprise.

You've certainly been very busy.

It's easy to forget *(to renew)*.

I know, it can be hard *(to keep track of what you have checked out)*.

I'm sorry you felt we were *(rude)*, that wasn't our intention.

so they can move on.

Concierge them

- Could I have my supervisor contact you?
- Would you be willing to give me your email address?
- If you wouldn't mind...
- If I could . . .
- Let me send you full bibliographic information so you can order a replacement.



Manipulation

Patron:

1. They did it for me before.
2. It's urgent.
3. I'm pitiful/desperate/broke.

You:

1. We did it before.
2. There's no time.
3. They're so helpless, I'm their only hope.

Making Exceptions

Judgment calls = your judgment + your Library's policies and guidelines.

1. **Make it clear** that it's YOUR call, not the patron's, and other staff at your institution may not choose to make the same call:

"I will make an exception this time. If this happens again, however, we will not make another exception."
2. **Depersonalize it** – do it because it is an exceptional **situation**, not because the patron was exceptionally incapable, unprepared, etc. IOW, do it for this patron because you would do the same thing for anyone in this situation.
3. **Sustainability** – Don't set up a pattern you can't sustain.

Email

1. Your name and contact information.
2. The patron.
3. The book – barcode, title and call number.
4. **Explain it as you would to your boss**, be clear about:
 - a. Which school the book belongs to.
 - b. Which school the patron belongs to.
 - c. What the problem is.
5. **Who** agreed to do **what** and **when** they agreed to do it.

Emails are easy to forward! Write as though the person you're writing about will be reading it.

Steamrollers on the Phone

You have options.

1. You may put them on hold (or at least cover the receiver and gather your thoughts).
2. Take notes (it may help you focus on the problem instead of the person).
3. Ask questions, if you can.
4. Tell them you need to review the situation and confer with your staff/supervisor.
5. Ask when it will be convenient for you to call them back. Better yet, offer to email the response.
6. Remember:
 - a. Patrons can ask for anything, it doesn't follow that you will be willing or able to give it to them.
 - b. Share the joy! The patron is always welcome to call your supervisor/head of the library/senator/etc.

Expectations



1. We can't control other institutions or people.
2. Life is not always fair.
3. It's **easier to set up** an expectation than to change it.

*NOTE: When you make an **exception** you're creating future **expectations**.*

4. Get to know your colleagues!
 1. Go to forums
 2. Get on the mailing lists.

Take care of yourselves

- www.calm.com
- www.donothingfor2minutes.com
- www.happify.com
- getgratitude.co/
- <http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/>

webology

- **How to Switch Off an Angry Person**

By [Nadia Persun, PhD](#), [Psych Central](#)

<http://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2012/07/26/how-to-switch-off-an-angry-person/>

- **Be Empathetic Not Sympathetic**

March 18, 2013 by [Steve Davis](#)

<http://facilitatoru.com/blog/facilitation/be-empathetic-not-sympathetic/>

- **Empathetic Listening**

Citation: Huitt, W. (2009). Empathetic listening. Educational Psychology Interactive. Valdosta, GA: Valdosta State University. Retrieved [date], from

<http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/topics/process/listen.html>

- **Six Habits of Highly Empathic People**

By [Roman Krznaric](#) | November 27, 2012 [The Greater Good Science Center](#) at the [University of California, Berkeley](#)

http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/six_habits_of_highly_empathic_people1



TED Talks | Best of the Web

Jeremy Rifkin: The empathic civilization

Filmed Aug 2010 • Posted Aug 2010 • RSA Animate

http://www.ted.com/talks/jeremy_rifkin_on_the_empathic_civilization.html

- **Therapists Spill: How I Set & Sustain Boundaries.**

Tartakovsky, M. (2013). *Psych Central*. Retrieved on April 30, 2014, from <http://psychcentral.com/lib/therapists-spill-how-i-set-sustain-boundaries/00017954>

- **What Are Personal Boundaries? How Do I Get Some?**

By Darlene Lancer, JD, MFT

<http://psychcentral.com/lib/what-are-personal-boundaries-how-do-i-get-some/00016100>

- **8 Principles for Effectively Maintaining Professional Boundaries as a Service Provider**

By Lisa Jordan. (2012). *Human Solutions, LLC*. Retrieved on May 7, 2014

<http://human-solutions.net/8-principles-for-effectively-maintaining-professional-boundaries-as-a-service-provider/>

- **Too Much Customer Service?**

By William J. Schroer. *The Social Librarian*. Retrieved on May 7, 2014

http://www.socialmarketing.org/newsletter/features/too_much.htm



- **Setting Healthy Workplace Boundaries**

UCSF Human Resources, FSAP. Retrieved on May 7, 2014

<http://ucsfhr.ucsf.edu/index.php/assist/article/setting-healthy-workplace-boundaries/>

- **Boundaries & Expecations**

By Susie Duncan. *Pinterest*.

<http://www.pinterest.com/sbduncan2/boundaries-vs-expecations/>

Note: Images not credited are from Microsoft Clipart or in public domain.